

Notice of Allowability

Application No.

09/805,046

Examiner

Yogesh C. Garg

Applicant(s)

TAKAE ET AL.

Art Unit

3625

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to 10/20/2006 & Telephone Interview on 12/6/2006.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-6 and 13-16.
3. ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
- ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* Certified copies not received: _____.

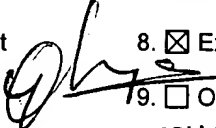
Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.

THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

4. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
5. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
- (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
- 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☒ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO/SB/08), Paper No./Mail Date 8/31/2006
- ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- ☒ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No./Mail Date 12/6/2006
- ☒ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
- ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
- ☐ Other _____


YOGESH C. GARG
PRIMARY EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 10/20/2006 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

2. The applicant's amendment received on 10/20/2006 is acknowledged and entered. Claims 1,3,13 and 15 are amended. Claims 7 and 20-22 are previously canceled and claims 8-12, 17-19 are previously withdrawn. Currently claims 1-6 & 13-16 are pending.

Response to Arguments

3. Applicant's arguments, see Remarks page 13, filed 10/20/2006, with respect to rejection of claims 1-6 and 13-16 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, have been fully considered and are persuasive in view of the current amendments made to claims 1, 13 and 15. The rejection of claims 1-6 and 13-16 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph has been withdrawn.

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Applicant's arguments, see Remarks pages 14-153, filed 10/20/2006, with respect to rejection of claims 1-6 and 13-16 under 35 USC 103 (a), have been fully considered and are persuasive in view of the current amendments filed on 10/20/2006 and the Examiner's amendment as presented below. The rejection is withdrawn. Upon further consideration and in view of the Examiner's amendment, presented below, claims 1-6 and 13-16 are allowed.

Information Disclosure Statement

4. The information disclosure statement filed 8/31/2006 fails to comply with 37 CFR 1.98(a)(3) because it does not include a concise explanation of the relevance, regarding a foreign reference line item 4, as it is presently understood by the individual designated in 37 CFR 1.56(c) most knowledgeable about the content of the information, of each patent listed that is not in the English language. This line item is canceled on the IDS form 1449 and has been placed in the application file, but the information referred to therein has not been considered.

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

5. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

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Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Mr. Stephen T. Boughner on 12/6/2006.

The application has been amended as follows:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for managing product information, said method comprising:

sending at least a purchased product information and a purchase number to a customer-terminal generated at the time of purchase particular to the purchase, with the purchase number being at least for subsequent related warranty generation and management;

creating warranty information for a purchased product by a sales information management database, separate from a shop that generated the purchase number and the customer-terminal, after the time of the purchase and upon receipt of the purchase number and customer information by the sales information management database;

receiving a repair request form including the purchase number from the customer-terminal;

retrieving the created warranty information, corresponding to the purchase number received from the customer-terminal used by the customer, from the sales information management database managing the purchase number indicating the purchased product and the created warranty information of a warranty of the purchased product;

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informing selectable request items with the retrieved warranty information to the customer-terminal;

conducting a repair process corresponding to one of the selectable request items, which is indicated from the customer-terminal;

receiving, from a shop terminal, a repair status request including a shop identification information and a requesting of a repair status, ~~from a shop terminal~~ corresponding to the conducted repair process;

determining whether the shop identification information is registered by searching for the shop identification information in a shop registration database;

obtaining the purchase number from the shop terminal, when the shop identification information is found in the shop registration database; and

sending the shop terminal the repair status which is based on repair history information by searching in a repair history database managing the repair history information concerning the repair request, based on the purchase number.

2. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said conducting of the request process further comprises deleting the purchased product information and the warranty information of a product indicated by the purchase number received from the customer-terminal, from the sales information management database when one of the selectable request items, indicated from the customer-terminal, shows a request to delete information related to a product that the customer purchased.

3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

sending the customer information and the purchased product information, from the shop terminal, to the sales information management database for the creating of the warranty information, upon receipt by the shop terminal of the customer information from the customer terminal, wherein:

said sales information management database manages the customer information concerning the customer by corresponding the customer to the purchase number of the product that the customer purchased; and

said conducting of the repair process comprises:

distributing a repair request sheet including repair information for a repair person who is selected by searching from the sales information management database based on the customer information corresponding to the purchase number received from the customer-terminal when one of the selectable request items, which is indicated from the customer-terminal, shows a request to repair the product that the customer purchased; and

maintaining repair contents conducted by the repair person and the purchase number of a repaired product as the repair history information to the repair history database.

4. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as claimed in claim 3, wherein said conducting of the request process further comprises:

notifying the customer of selectable receiving place items showing places to receive a repaired product such that said distributing a repair request sheet distributes said repair request sheet including one of the selectable receiving place items, which is indicated by the customer, to said repair person.

5. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as claimed in claim 3, wherein said informing selectable request items comprises:

checking whether or not a same repair is conducted within a predetermined period, by searching for the repair history information from said repair history database based on the purchase number received from the customer; and

informing said warranty information and said request items with a result of said checking to the customer.

6. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as claimed in claim 3, further comprising:

searching for the purchase number corresponding to the repair contents showing a recall from said repair history database;

extracting the customer information from said sales information management database based on the search corresponding to the repair contents; and

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informing recall information to recall a product, to each customer who purchased the product based on the customer information extracted from said sales information management database.

7-12. (CANCELED)

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable recording medium having a program recorded thereon for causing a computer to manage product information, by:

sending at least a purchased product information and a purchase number to a customer-terminal generated at the time of purchase particular to the purchase, with the purchase number being at least for subsequent related warranty generation and management;

creating warranty information for a purchased product by a sales information management database, separate from a shop that generated the purchase number and the customer-terminal, after the time of the purchase and upon receipt of the purchase number and customer information by the sales information management database;

receiving a repair request form including the purchase number from the customer-terminal;

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retrieving the created warranty information corresponding to the purchase number received from the customer-terminal used by the customer, from the sales information management database managing the purchase number identifying the purchased product and the warranty information of a warranty of the purchased product;

informing selectable request items with the retrieved warranty information to the customer-terminal;

conducting a repair process corresponding to one of the selectable request items, which is indicated from the customer-terminal;

receiving, from a shop terminal, a repair status request including a shop identification information and a requesting of a repair status, ~~from a shop terminal~~ corresponding to the conducted repair process;

determining whether the shop identification information is registered by searching for the shop identification information in a shop registration database;

obtaining the purchase number from the shop terminal, when the shop identification information is found in the shop registration database; and

sending the shop terminal the repair status which is based on repair history information by searching in a repair history database managing the repair history information concerning the repair request, based on the purchase number.

14. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable recording medium as claimed in claim 13, further comprising:

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sending the customer information and the purchased product information, from the shop terminal, to the sales information management database for the creating of the warranty information, upon receipt by the shop terminal of the customer information from the customer terminal, wherein

said sales information management database manages the customer information concerning the customer by corresponding the customer to the purchased product identification of the product that the customer purchased; and

said conducting a request process comprises the codes of:

distributing a repair request sheet including repair information for a repair person who is selected by searching from the sales information management database based on the customer information corresponding to the purchased product identification received from the customer-terminal when one of the selectable request items, which is indicated from the customer-terminal, shows a request to repair the product that the customer purchased, and

maintaining repair contents conducted by the repair person and the purchased product identification of a repaired product as the repair history information to the repair history database.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An apparatus for managing product information, comprising:

an output part sending at least a purchased product information and a purchase number to a customer-terminal generated at the time of purchase particular to the purchase, with the purchase number being at least for subsequent related warranty generation and management;

a sales information management database creating warranty information for a purchased product, separate from a shop that generated the purchase number and the customer-terminal, after the time of the purchase and upon receipt of the purchase number and customer information by the sales information management database, wherein the sales information management database further manages the purchase number identifying the purchased product and the warranty information identifies a warranty of the purchased product;

managing;

an input part receiving a repair request form including the purchase number from the customer-terminal;

a warranty information retrieving part retrieving the warranty information corresponding to the purchase number received from the customer-terminal used by the customer, from said sales information management database;

a request item informing part informing selectable request items with the warranty information retrieved by said warranty information retrieving part to the customer-terminal;

a repair process conducting part conducting a repair process corresponding to one of the selectable request items, which is indicated from the customer-terminal; and

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a service center part configured to:

receive~~ing~~, from a shop terminal, a repair status request including a shop identification information and a requesting of a repair status, ~~from a shop terminal~~ corresponding to the conducted repair process;

determine~~ing~~ whether the shop identification information is registered by searching for the shop identification information in a shop registration database;

obtaining the purchase number from the shop terminal, when the shop identification information is found in the shop registration database; and

send~~ing~~ the shop terminal the repair status which is based on repair history information by searching in a repair history database managing the repair history information concerning the repair request, based on the purchase number.

16. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein customer information and the purchased product information are sent from the shop terminal to the sales information management database upon receipt by the shop terminal of the customer information from the customer terminal, wherein

said sales information management database manages the customer information concerning the customer by corresponding the customer to the purchased product identification of the product that the customer purchased; and

said request process conducting part comprises:

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a repair request sheet distributing part distributing a repair request sheet including repair information for a repair person who is selected by searching from the sales information management database based on the customer information corresponding to the purchased product identification receive from the customer-terminal when one of the selectable request items, which is indicated from the customer-terminal, shows a request to repair the product that the customer purchased , and

a repair contents maintaining part maintaining repair contents conducted by the repair person and the purchased product identification of a repaired product as the repair history information to the repair history database.

17-22. (CANCELED)

6. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Claims allowed are : 1-6, and 13-16

With reference claim 1, the prior art of record, either alone or combined, does not fairly suggest or render obvious a method comprising and configured to implement, inter alia, the steps, as a whole, comprising sending at least a purchased product information and a purchase number to a customer-terminal generated at the time of purchase particular to the purchase, with the purchase number being at least for subsequent related warranty generation and management, creating warranty information for a

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purchased product by a sales information management database, separate from a shop that generated the purchase number and the customer-terminal, after the time of the purchase and upon receipt of the purchase number and customer information by the sales information management database, receiving a repair request form including the purchase number from the customer-terminal, retrieving the created warranty information, corresponding to the purchase number received from the customer-terminal used by the customer, from the sales information management database managing the purchase number indicating the purchased product and the created warranty information of a warranty of the purchased product, informing selectable request items with the retrieved warranty information to the customer-terminal, conducting a repair process corresponding to one of the selectable request items, which is indicated from the customer-terminal, receiving, from a shop terminal, a repair status request including a shop identification information and a requesting of a repair status, corresponding to the conducted repair process, determining whether the shop identification information is registered by searching for the shop identification information in a shop registration database, obtaining the purchase number from the shop terminal, when the shop identification information is found in the shop registration database, and sending the shop terminal the repair status which is based on repair history information by searching in a repair history database managing the repair history information concerning the repair request, based on the purchase number. (see currently amended claim 1 above).

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Since independent claims 13 and 15 recite limitations closely parallel to the limitations of claim 1, the reasons for allowance for claims 13 and 15 are based on the same rationale as cited above.

The reasons for allowance for dependent claims 2-6, 14 and 16 are based on the same rationale as cited above for the independent claims 1, 13 and 15 above..

7. Discussion of most relevant prior art:

The most relevant prior art of record is Wallis et al. (US Publication Number: 2001/0051884 A1), hereinafter, referred to as Wallis in view of Groat et al. (US Publication 2002/0111884 A1), hereinafter referred to Groat cited in the final office action mailed on 6/22/2006.

Wallis (see Abstract) teaches a system and method for storing and managing data related to sales of products covered by warranties and the information stored is accessible via a computer network such as the Internet. A purchaser can request for a repair of a purchased product under warranty and the system automatically arranges for the repair and a repair center. Later the purchaser can access the system via a terminal to know the repair status of the product by accessing his purchaser account on the system. Groat (see paragraph 0007) teaches a system and method for storing, managing and tracking information related to a product within a supply chain comprising, a supplier, manufacturer, distributor, customer, a repair center via an unique identification number of the service contract.

Wallis (see figs 1-2, 5, paragraphs 0008-0009, 0019 and 0035-0049) teaches sending the record of product sale to a system wherein the system generates a message and sends to the purchaser introducing the system and its services. The services include allowing the

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purchaser to view online his purchases and warranty information and enables him to initiate a repair request. The product to be repaired is collected and the repair process is controlled by the system till it is repaired and returned to the purchaser. The system (see paragraph 0019) generates purchaser and vendor accounts displaying relevant information about the products purchased and sold and the corresponding warranty information. Wallis discloses receiving a repair status request from a shop/vendor terminal (see Wallis, paragraph 0045 which shows that this request is received from a terminal of vendor system 60 and the vendor center 60 corresponds to a shop.), determining whether the shop identification information is registered by searching for the shop identification information in a shop registration database (see paragraphs 0039, 0043-0045. Since all vendors/shops are registered by generating/registering their accounts and the accounts information are stored in database "45" it would be inherent to determine whether a vendor/shop is registered by searching for the shop/vendor identification information in a shop registration database 45 whenever the system receives a request to display a repair report/status from a shop/vendor or parcel delivery service/repair shop center or a purchaser.). Groat discloses generating a service contract "314" having a unique identification code "316"(see at least paragraph 0045). Wallis and Groat, individually or combined, does not disclose, as a whole, the inventive steps of the applicant as stated above underlined. In this regard, the applicant's remarks, filed 10/20/2006, see page 13 are persuasive and compelling :

"The Office Action has attempted to interpret a majority of the claimed features for the independent claims to be a system where a customer can purchase a product and then later contact the underlying company (either through a local computer or a shop) for a repair status. Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed invention has previously been argued, and/or now more thoroughly clarified, that the claimed purchase number is for use to subsequently generate and maintain a warranty for a corresponding purchased product and that the creating of the subsequent warranty information is performed outside of the shop or customer-terminal. Here, the typical systems relied on by the Office action appear to require the warranty information to be generated before purchase of a product.

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Similarly, regarding applicant's previous amendment to dependent claim 3 claiming the sending of customer information and purchased product information from the shop to the sales information management database, the Office Action has apparently forced the claimed purchased product information and purchase number to be related to a separate service agreement, i.e., an additional service outside of our warranty focus, while the same was not explained or claimed as the same. Thus, to clarify the claimed invention and to more clearly direct the focus of search of prior art, applicants have amended the independent claims away from both this pre-existing/co-incident warranty information generation and/or service agreement interpretations. Accordingly, when all claimed features are considered as a whole, it is respectfully submitted that the previous interpretations of the same will more clearly be found to not be applicable to presently claimed invention.....In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that it would not have been obvious to modify Wallis et al. in view of Groat to disclose all the claimed features, as a whole. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that this rejection of claims 1-3, 5, and 13-16 be withdrawn. For at least similar rationale, it is respectfully submitted that claims 4 and 6 are equally in allowable condition. "

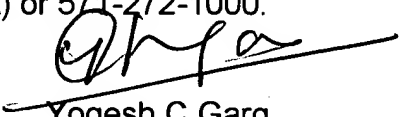
8. Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

9. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Yogesh C. Garg whose telephone number is 571-272-6756. The examiner can normally be reached on Increased Flex.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jeffrey A. Smith can be reached on 571-272-6763. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.


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Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3625YCG
12/17/2006